

A READER'S GUIDE

A Time To Be Born

DAWN POWELL

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Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss Amanda's childhood and the fact that she alludes to trying to forget it altogether. Why do you think it was so painful? Do you think her reputation from Lakeville haunts her as an adult? Discuss how she manipulated her parents.

2. Early in the book, it is said of Amanda that "she was sure she neither loved nor admired" Ken Saunders, "but could not dismiss him." What then attracts her to a man like Ken as opposed to a man as powerful as Julian? Do you think Ken is still "wrapped around Amanda's finger" at the end of the story? What could Julian have done as a husband to make Amanda feel more special and satisfied with their relationship?

3. Miss Bemel and Mr. Castor play a somewhat significant role in the story. Do you find it ironic that Amanda and Julian chose assistants who are so different from one another, which causes

them to disagree fairly often? In what ways is this fact a telling reflection of their relationship?

4. Amanda's relationship with both Callingham and Saunders poses a serious risk to her relationship with Julian. She is clearly afraid that with one false move she could lose both her reputation and her relationship with Julian. What does she see in these other men that she does not get from Julian? Can her love for Julian be described as at all "true," or is it just a ploy to gain power and notoriety?

5. Amanda does Vicky Haven a favor by bringing her to New York and getting her situated. What do you think are her motivations for doing this good turn?

6. Powell wrote in her famous diaries: "There is only one city for everyone just as there is one major love. New York is my city because I have an investment I can always draw on — a bottomless investment of twenty-one years (I count the day I was born) of building up an idea of New York — so no matter what happens here I have the rock of my dreams of it that nothing can destroy." Since the time she was a girl Powell believed that New York was the one place she'd be able to fully realize herself and pursue her dreams. Though fame and fortune as a writer eluded her during her lifetime, she did have a stunningly productive career and never regretted her decision. What were Amanda's and Vicky's reasons for coming to New York? How did their experiences match up to Powell's own?

7. Gender roles and politics play a significant part in Powell's story. In some ways the roles Powell's characters choose or are forced to play are products of the place and time — America in the early 1940s. In other ways Powell's depiction of relations be-

tween the sexes transcend place and time. Discuss those elements of her plot that depend on outdated gender roles and those that reflect the truth of the old adage “the more things change the more they stay the same.”